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THE  
IMPORTANCE  
OF THE  
COLONIES of NORTH AMERICA,  
And the INTEREST of  
GREAT BRITAIN with regard to them,  
CONSIDERED.

Together with  
REMARKS on the STAMP-DUTY.

[By Nicholas Ray]

*Lo! swarming o'er the new discover'd World,  
Gay Colonies extend; the calm Retreat  
Of undeserv'd Distress.* —

— Bound by Social Freedom, firm they rise;  
Of Britain's Empire the Support and Strength.

THOMSON.

L O N D O N :

inted for T. PEAT, in the Passage of the Temple-Exchange Coffee-House, Fleetstreet. 1766.



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[ Price ONE SHILLING. ]





T H E

# IMPORTANCE, &c.

WITHIN these few Years frequent have been the Alarms that the State was in Danger, nor would I venture to affirm that they have always been without Foundation. We have had powerful Enemies abroad, distressed Allies to support, Rebellion at home, Faction and Discontent among the People, which has risen to an enormous Height, and has even extended itself to our Colonies in *North America*, where the Spirit of Riot has broke out at *Boston*, and with the utmost Violence attacked several of the King's Officers, plundered their Houses, and robbed them of their Effects, and set Government at Defiance. Encouraged by this Example, the Multitude at *Rhode-*

*Island* were proceeding to the same Violences, so that some of the principal Inhabitants, it is said, were obliged to betake themselves to Ships to avoid their Rage. How alarming are such Acts of Violence in a civilized Country, and subversive of all Order and good Government, which every good and loyal Subject ought to support to the utmost of his Power? But altho' the other Colonies, much to their Honour, have not proceeded to such Violence, yet we are well assured that great Uneasiness and Discontent prevails in all of them, on account of an Act of Parliament, imposing a Stamp-Duty, to which, they say, if they submit, it will be an Introduction to all the Variety of Taxes which are paid in *England*, besides the numerous Taxes imposed on them by their own Representatives..

To justify themselves in this Disobedience to the Act, they presume to call the Right of the House of Commons over them in question. This is a Matter of such Importance, that it cannot fail of being one of the first Things considered by that august House, when their own Dignity, and Justice to the Colonies, I hope, will both be defended and supported; and in the mean time I wish to see the Ministry act with Spirit on this most important Occasion, but should be sorry to see their Actions were mere Deeds of Power; for it should always be remembered, that the Colonies are our Brethren and Fellow-Subjects, free-born *Britons* equally as we are, and intitled equally with us to every Right and Privilege of *Britons*. We should inquire, therefore, whether we have behaved to them as Brethren? and whether we have not exacted from them what we should have judged extremely hard to have suffered ourselves? The first Right of a *Briton* is, that he  
cannot

cannot be tried but by his Peers ; the next, that he cannot be taxed but by a Parliament, in which he is represented, or by Gentlemen who pay a Share of the Tax they impose on him ; for the Law, not trusting too much to Virtue, wisely proceeds on this Supposition, that however inattentive a Man may be to the Concerns of others, he will probably pay some Regard to his own Interest ; and it is in this View that the Law requires a Man to be possessed of a certain Estate, to intitle him to represent others. Are the Colonies then in this Manner represented in the Parliament of *Great Britain* ? Do those who impose Taxes on them pay also a Share of those Taxes ? If this is not the Case, what have the Colonies done that they should be stripped of one of the most valuable Privileges of *Britons* ? Have the Parliament a Right to take from the lowest of the Subjects the smallest Privilege which he inherits, unless forfeited by Law ? Do not misunderstand me. I do not by any Means call the Power of Parliament in question ; I know they are in many Cases omnipotent ; they may, of Power, pass a Law by which any Colony should be deprived the Privilege of being tried by Jury ; but I ask, could they of Right do it ? for between Power and Right is a very great Difference.

It is said, and I believe truly, that, in 1763, when the Sugar-Act passed, that the Stamp-Duty was then under Consideration ; but the evil Consequence being represented, it was resolved by the then Ministry to put it off, in order to have the Sense of the Colonies on it ; they, therefore, last Sessions would have applied by Petition to Parliament against the Manner of imposing the Stamp-Act ; but I am informed no Member would present their Petitions, for it seems it was against

against the Forms of the House. That honourable House ought to know best whether Forms ought to stand in the Way of Right, especially when so great a Part of this Empire desired to be heard: If a Chapter of Magna Charta had been the Impediment, it should be removed, it should be annulled.

This Rejection to be heard, has caused all the Colonies to resolve to send Deputies from their Assemblies to meet at *New York*; from whence, it is probable, they will again attempt to petition Parliament. If their Demands are reasonable, Justice requires that so vast a Part of this Empire should be heard; and I am well convinced that they will demand nothing that is unreasonable, or inconsistent with the Laws.

The utmost Wisdom of Parliament will be wanted on this most important Occasion; and no Member, it is hoped, will advise an improper Exertion of Power. It is the true Interest of *Britain* to acquire and retain, not to alienate the Affections of her Colonies, which surpass most Kingdoms of *Europe* in Power and Number of People; and this can only be done by kind Usage, and always considering them, as they most certainly are in all respects, on the same Footing with ourselves, and of Right intitled to every Privilege that we in *England* enjoy.

The Colonies are so many distant Provinces of the *British* Empire, and which add great Dignity and Power to it, and will continue to do so infinitely more; but if, instead of improving this vast Accession of Dominion to our mutual Advantage, we make Enemies of our Friends and Fellow Subjects, and thereby convert this Blessing of Heaven into

a Curse, then, indeed, we may have Cause to weep, and to mourn over our late Conquests, whilst every Power in *Europe* would rejoice in our Divisions and Distractions, which they already do, and will not fail to encourage.

Never, therefore, did the Welfare, and even Independence, of this Kingdom call more for the utmost Wisdom and united Counsels of the Government, than on this most important Occasion ; for it should be remembered, that the *British Empire* on the Continent of *North America* extends more than 2000 Miles, in which is every Kind of Soil and Climate, and therefore yields, in greater Plenty, near all the Productions of *Europe*, and is certainly capable of producing every Kind of Fruits that any Part of the World is known to afford.

Besides these Blessings of Life, they have all the Sinews of Power. The Earth is known to contain innumerable Iron Mines, endless Forests of Oak and other Timber, Pitch, Tar, Hemp, Flax ; vast Banks, Rivers, Bays, Harbours, abounding with the greatest Fisheries on the Globe ; so that not a Doubt can be entertained that this vast Country will, in Time, become the greatest Empire that the World has ever seen ; and this Opinion is confirmed by the rapid Progress they have made since 1621, when a few persecuted People first went thither, and who are now become near three Millions ; these, in a Country where Land is so easily had, and which occasions early Marriages, cannot fail, in twenty-five Years, of becoming six Millions, which is about equal to the People of *England* ; and this Increase will continue in a Country, whose Bounds westward are unknown.

This is such a striking Prospect of increasing Population in those Regions, as should induce us to desert the Idea of being long able to subject them to our Power. They have already often aided us in our *American Wars*, and they will soon be able to do so in *Europe*; we ought therefore to adopt true Policy, which is, to rule them with Lenity, for that only can continue for Ages, what an Exertion of Power might fail to secure for a few Years.

The great Uneasiness and Discontent of the Colonies, having taken its Rise from the Stamp Duty laid on them; this, we see, has set them upon estimating for themselves, and of their Utility to us; and accordingly they set a Value upon themselves, and we ought to be aware how very strongly the Estimation of their own Utility will on all Occasions operate on their Minds. The *North Americans* say they have been toiling for the Mother-Country; that the Fruits of all their Labour centers here; that therefore, if they are not considered as Children, their Treatment is that of Slaves, and therefore, if oppressed; they must unite. They accordingly cry out for Union, which has produced a Congress of all the Colonies, whose Deputies are now assembled at *New-York*, which is first proposed for Representation only; but should they not succeed, we should be aware of what they may next proceed to consult on; as also what may prove the Consequence of rooted Hatred and Desperation.

I therefore cannot help censuring those to be tyrannic Principles; which are for dragooning, and an Exertion of Power and Authority, because I am well convinced that true Policy often dictates to Authority

to yield upon critical Exigencies ; the highest Authority has often done it with true Wisdom in this Kingdom, as in the proposed Excise on Wine and Tobacco in 1733, and in 1755 repealing the Jew Bill. We ought always to give Applause to those who, by restoring Harmony, prevent Desperation.

True Principles of Policy and Commerce abhor Restrictions that tend to prevent our Colonies of *North America* from enriching themselves by other States, for such are a Prejudice to the Mother-Country, because all the Riches which they acquire, must, in some Shape or other, center here ; and to prove this, you can have no better Authority than the Course of Exchange ; and how immensely that is against the Colonies, must be known to all Men. Whatever therefore they get, they only subsist themselves, being always kept in a State of deep Debt to us. What can we desire more ? and whom can we injure more by Restrictions and severe Laws than ourselves ?

Restraints on their Trade then certainly is very impolitic ; for whatever Trade they carry on, if they get but a Ballance in their Favour, it must turn to our Advantage ; and surely, of all Instruments for ruining and suppressing Trade, Military and Marine are the most detestable ; their arbitrary Principles are incompatible with Commerce, which can never flourish but with Mildness and Encouragement ; nor ought Vice Admiralty Courts to be intrusted with Power over Commerce.

As to the Stamp and other Taxes, if they have not Money enough even to pay for our Manufactures, nothing can be gained by attempting

ing to tax them ; because if you take their Money for Taxes, you lose it in Commerce, which must end in the Ruin of your Merchants, and numerous Manufacturers ; for what is gained by Taxes is so much Loss to Trade ; the draining therefore from them every Farthing of their Money by Trade, and then demanding from them more by Taxes, is absolutely reducing them to *Egyptian Slavery*, of making Bricks without Straw.

In short, the great Object with Regard to *North America* is vending our Manufactures, which, the more they are enabled to buy, so much the better it must be for us in the Employment of our People at home, and the Returns we receive ; and the less we study to perplex ourselves, by attempting to tax them, the more it will be to our Advantage, and contribute to the Peace and Prosperity of both Countries.

The ruling Policy of every State is unquestionably Self-Interest; the Policy therefore of every State of *Europe*, and particularly our inveterate Enemies, must induce them to wish a Revolt of our Colonies on the Continent of *North America*; and they would not fail of supporting them, either openly or secretly, in doing it, whereby that whole Continent would be thrown open to them in point of Trade, which this Kingdom now alone enjoys. The Part which both *England* and *France* took when *Holland* revolted from *Spain*, proves that my Apprehensions are not ill grounded ; if therefore Severity is used, to inforce an unpopular Act, and that Desperation should ensue, it would not only be Matter of great Joy to our inveterate Enemies, but they would second such Disobedience with all their Power, in order to confirm it, and thereby

thereby hope to reduce the Dignity and Power of *Great Britain*; and in such dreadful Situation, which (God forbid) the Evil would not stop in *North America*, for the *West Indies* would most probably follow the Fortune of the Continent. It should always be remembered, that *Spain* lost both *Portugal* and *Holland* by her Acts of Severity, and in those famous Revolutions every Power of *Europe* rejoiced. We ought therefore to be very careful in our Conduct towards the *Americans*, whom, in all Probability, every Power in *Europe* would encourage to Rebellion; whereby they would greatly weaken this Kingdom, and advance their own Interest.

Such Considerations as these should point out to this Kingdom the right Rule of Policy to be pursued with regard to our Colonies, which contain near three Millions of People; and this Rule is, to acquire and retain, by Acts of Lenity and Mildness, the Affections of our Colonies, and not to alienate them by Severity; for the Time will approach, in which it will become extremely dangerous to attempt ruling so vast a Continent, already abounding with Millions, by the Iron Rod of Power, the Sway of which will only make them the sooner refractory; and when the Fire of Resistance is once kindled, there is no foreseeing how far it may spread. The Desire of Independence is inherent in all Men, and few will longer bear even imaginary Grievances, with the Means in their Hands, however desperate, of shaking them off. This has been seen in *Rome*, which was once the Mistress of the World, the Seat of Arts, Empire, and Glory; but who, by her Oppression of a Part of *Asia*, *Africa*, and the greatest Part of *Europe*, which could no longer bear the Severity of her Government, forced them to renounce her Jurisdiction, and set up for themselves; in consequence of which great

Kingdoms arose, and this Country, (*Britain*) antiently the Jeſt of the polite *Romans*, became the happy Seat of Liberty, Plenty, and Power, whilst her former Sovereign (*Rome*) lies funk into Slavery, Ignorance, and Poverty. Let this be a Warning to us how we conduct ourſelves to our Colonies, who, for the first Time, are now united in a Congress at *New York*; from this Union of their Councils, we cannot tell what they will resolve, but, from all Accounts, many of the People ſeem ripe for Desperation, because they think themſelves opprefſed. We ſhould remember that they are *Englishmen*, and many of them inherit from their Anceſters republican Principles, which they carried thither during the civil Wars; being perſecuted here, they fled to the Forests of *Ame-rica* for the Sake of Liberty; their Sons are all of them actuated by the ſame Principles of Liberty, which Spirit perhaps is more prevalent there than in this Kingdom.

For these Reasons great Care ought to be taken in our Conduct towards the *Americans*. To attract willing Obedience from them muſt al-ways be more ſafe than to exact it by Compulsion; and it can never deserve Reproach to correct human Policy and Error. The Rulers of Kingdoms, no more than other Men, are always wiſe; and when they are not ſo, it is happy if they ſee their Errors before it is too late, and not perſevere in them through Obſtinacy, rather than discover to the World that they have been wrong, as has frequently been the Caſe, even to the producing the very worst Effects; but we are at preſent exposed to no ſuch Hazard from the Meaſures that have em-broiled our Colonies, because our preſent Ministers cannot be intereſted in the covering or ſupporting the Errors of the laſt. I hope in these Thoughts to be rightely understood; my Meaning is, to point out the

true Policy that I think this Kingdom ought to pursue ; for the single Object of Union between us and the Colonies, is undoubtedly Convenience and Self-interest ; for if we had no Views of reaping Profit, or an Accession of Power from *North America*, we should not concern ourselves farther about them, than to prevent their falling into other Hands, to the endangering us : and the Affection of the *North Americans* to this Nation, from which they sprung, together with the Protection which they received in their infant State, secures their Duty and Loyalty.

But in all Debates at this Time, too much Stress is laid on that Protection, since whatever we did for them was with a View to serve ourselves ; and, to speak the Truth, our persecuting the Dissenters in the Times of *James* and *Charles I.* by High Commission and Spiritual Courts, compelled the Ancestors of the People of *New England* to fly thither from Ecclesiastical Tyranny.

The same Spirit of Persecution prevailed against the Quakers in the latter End of the Reign of *Charles II.* and, being made very uneasy thro' Popish Bigotry, Mr. *Penn*, the modern *Lycurgus*, solicited and obtained a Grant of *Pensilvania*. Thither he took great Numbers of Quakers at his own Expence, which were followed by many others, in order there to enjoy their innocent and conscientious Opinions.

Thus it appears that the four Colonies of *New England* and *Pensilvania* were peopled by our Persecution, and without receiving any other Aid than that of Protection only, and for which they have not been ungrateful ; for it should be remembered, that, in consequence of our Wars in *Europe*, whenever we sent an Expedition to *America*, we have always been assisted by our Colonies, to the utmost of their Power ; for in

1690, when Sir William Phipps was sent against Canada, New England alone sent 3000 Men and forty Transports; and in the Expedition under General Hill, in the Reign of Queen Anne, against the same Country, the Colonies sent 6000 Men. In 1739, at the Request of the Government, 4000 men were instantly raised in the Colonies, and sent, at their own Expence, to *Jamaica*, the Place of Rendezvous, from whence they were conveyed to *Carthagena*, and there used. In the Course of that War, when our Affairs looked deplorable enough in *Europe*, *New England*, even without our Knowledge, or a single Soldier from *Britain*, undertook the Conquest of *Cape Breton*; they succeeded in it, and thereby gave Peace to this Kingdom. During the late War they had 20,000 Men in Arms against the Enemy in *North America*, and when the *French* were totally conquered there, they seconded our Designs in *South America* against the *Havannah*, which important Place, it is said, would not have been taken, but by the seasonable Arrival of the Troops from *New York*, when our own were swept away by a fatal Distemper: For these, and many more of their Services, Duty, and Loyalty, they claim the Liberty of *British Subjects*, and to which they affirm they have an hereditary Right.

They have now no *European* Power that they can dread in their Neighbourhood, and their own internal Power is very considerable, and this will increase very fast, which a just and gentle Sway may for Ages connect to this Kingdom; they will be held to it by the Ties of Consanguinity, Religion, Language, Manners, Customs, and Laws; these, with good Usage, will long secure them to us; for they will always consider us as their safest and best Friend in *Europe*,

But our greatest Security and Power over them, must consist in their Disunion as Colonies ; but unhappily the Stamp Act has absolutely driven them to cry out for Union, and accordingly their Councils are now united in a Congress at New York. They will now feel their Power, and become sensible of the *Dutch Motto*, that *Unity gives Strength*.

The Advantages which we seek from the Colonies are in a commercial Way, and as they add to our Power, we should therefore, by Plans of mild Government, attract them as Colonies respectively, and we should rather make them Rivals for our Favour, than united Friends in opposing us. We must not think that the *North Americans*, who have a watchful Eye over our Proceedings, and are greatly jealous of their Liberty, will suffer their Properties and Interests to be misapplied. *America* is every Year growing more inviting, and *Great Britain* perhaps more disgusting ; in which Case her Strength will increase, whilst our's will decrease, for we daily see many of our Manufacturers and useful People getting that Side of the Water. In short, the Means most apparently solid for securing our Colonies to us, must be, to favour their Industry in every Way but manufacturing, and securing to ourselves the Fruits thereof, by furnishing them with our Manufactures on cheaper Terms than they can procure them elsewhere ; this will tend to promote mutual Harmony and Prosperity, and a lasting Union with our Colonies respectively, without weakening their natural Rivalries, which, tho' we need not foment, we should not wish to lessen, nor by any Means by unpopular Acts drive them to Union ; but this unfortunately has been done by the Stamp Act, since the passing whic<sup>1</sup>, and the Sugar Act of 1763, great Numbers of our Manufacturers have been in-

vited, and are gone to settle in *North America*, the Effects of which are already, and will soon be much more severely felt in this Kingdom.

It is a mistaken Policy to attempt making the *North Americans* Slaves to our Interest or Power, for they are too knowing to be made the former, and too high-spirited to become the latter; the only Way to keep them dependant on this Kingdom, must proceed from the Wisdom and Rectitude of the Government; no distinct Interest must be pursued, and, above all, the landed Interest must not be favoured at the Expence of the commercial; for in Fact, the landed Interest can only be supported by the Prosperity of Commerce, in which we should indulge the *Americans* as much as in our Power, and thereby take off their Attention from becoming Manufacturers. This only is true Policy, and on such Principles we should begin with preventing them from being harrassed by Vice Admiralty Courts, and remove every existing Cause of just Complaint, and we should consider their Prosperity as the Source of our Riches; by this Conduct we should restore Content and Harmony both here, there, and between us. This is the true System which I think ought to be observed, and those who fail in pursuing it, will be the just Abhorrence both of *Britons* and *Americans*.

But to return to the Stamp Act, in the Preamble of which it is said to be just and necessary that Provision be made for raising a further Revenue toward defraying the Expences of defending, protecting, and securing the Colonies in *America*:

It would not only be imprudent, but ill become me to attack the Wisdom of that House, of which I always desire to think and speak with Respect;

Respect; but I cannot help remarking, that for a Century past, whilst *Canada* and *Louisiana* were in the Hands of *France*, the Colonies wanted no such Defence or Security from *England*, for they defended themselves; but now, when *Louisiana*, *Cape Breton*, and *Canada* are all reduced to the Obedience of, and possessed by the Crown of *England*, now that there is not a *French* Subject left on that Continent, it is thought necessary to keep a considerable Army in the Colonies, for the Support of which this grievous and unpopular Act is imposed; but it has been said, they are necessary to reduce the Indians; this, tho' a very idle one, I know was the Pretext. The Colonies have defended themselves a hundred Years since against the Indians, and are they now all of a sudden become unable, with the Addition of several hundred thousand Men? This is extraordinary indeed! But if the Indians were not inclined to live in Peace, it would be very hard if the Colonies could not bring them to Subjection without the Crown keeping a numerous Body of Troops in a Country where Soldiers are so very disagreeable; and not only so, but to lay heavy Duties on Merchandise, ~~and even a Stamp Tax, for the Support of Sick Troops,~~ and in a Country where every Man by Beat of Drum is obliged to appear under Arms; for all the Colonies are formed in a regular and well-disciplined Militia; and they are so sensible of their Numbers, that they would be extremely glad to see every Soldier embark for *England*, since they are of no Use; but a Burthen to the Colonies, whose real Defence and Protection is received from the Valour of their own native Militia; nor have they an Enemy worth Notice within 3000 Miles of them.

With the recalling therefore of those Troops from among them, the Cause of the Stamp Tax will be removed; the Colonies would then resume

sume their Trade, which is now ruined ; and their Heads, which are at present full of manufacturing, would be employed on Schemes of Commerce and Navigation ; the Fruits of all their Labour would continuall to center in *Great Britain* ; and the Language which they now hold, that they are treated not as *Englishmen*, but as Aliens and Slaves, would immediately subside ; their Affections and Labours would be united in promoting the Trade and Interest of this Kingdom, and all Things would return to their late happy and prosperous State.

But it may perhaps be said, that admitting the Parliament were convinced of the Inability of the Colonies paying the Stamp Duty, and that they were inclined to repeal the Act, but that the *Americans*, by denying the Authority of that august House to impose internal Taxes on them, has, as it were, put it out of the Power of Parliament to repeal the Act, because their Dignity is concerned.

To which I answer, that as to the Authority of Parliament, that august House can resolve, that their legislative Power is not confined to *Great Britain*, but doth extend over the whole *British Empire* ; that it is hereditary and inherent in them ; and that they will defend and support such their Authority and Dignity whenever Occasion shall require.

After this, if they are convinced of the Impropriety of the Act, they can, I humbly conceive, consistently with their Honour, suspend its Execution for twelve Months, or any other Period of Time, till a new Parliament, when some small commercial Tax may be laid on them, and this abrogated.

F I N I S.

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